

the LAN 40. The object commodities which images are taken by the TV camera 20A are concentratedly inventoried by the inventory computer 50A or 50B or the mobile information terminal 50C.

5           The inventory computer 50B is installed in the head office of the company, and is communicably connected to the control computers 10A, each disposed at each selling area of the head office, via the LAN 40. Further, the inventory computer 50B  
10 is communicably connected to each of the control computers 10A, each of which is disposed at each selling area of an individual branch office, via the telephone line 60.

          The inventory computer 50B is communicably  
15 connected to a mobile information terminal 50C (a mobile information processing terminal, a remote management apparatus), such as a mobile telephone, operated by a part-time employee via modem 51b. The inventory computer 50B transmits images taken by  
20 the TV camera 20A to the mobile information terminal 50C, and receives various instructions and images from the mobile information terminal 50C. The mobile information terminal 50C is equipped with a management display 53C, and has identical  
25 functions as those of the inventory computers 50A and 50B. An operator is able to make a remote inventory of the object commodities using the mobile

information terminal 50C.

The mobile information terminal 50C, of course, comprises the image receiver 51 and the instruction transmitter 52, likewise the inventory computers 50A and 50B. The mobile information terminal 50C may further comprise the pointing device 54, the marker 55, and the counter 56.

In this example, the inventory computer 50A is installed at a remote place, such as at an overseas branch office in a foreign country, in a different time zone from the time zone where the shop is located. Thereby, employees and part-time employees of the overseas branch office, as the inventory-taking employees, operate the inventory computer 50A to make a remote inventory of the object commodities.

An inventory employee obtains an image of a selling area where a desired object commodity is stocked using the inventory computer 50A or 50B or the mobile information terminal 50C as required, and sees the obtained image of the selling area which image has been displayed on the management display 53A, 53B, or 53C in order to count the object commodities obtained in the image and check the expiration dates of the individual object commodities. At that time, if the inventory employee has difficulty in counting the object commodities or checking the expiration date of an

individual object commodity due to a customer's movement of the object commodity or other reason, the inventory employee notifies a clerk at the selling area of the difficulty and the clerk makes an inventory of only the obscured object commodities.

In the tele-inventory system 100, it is possible to make an inventory of object commodities at a place remote from a shop where the object commodities are sold and stocked. Images of the individual floor of a department store and images of the individual selling area of the individual shop located at a remote place from the head office are transmitted to the inventory computer 50B of the head office, in which the object commodities sold and stocked in multiple floors or shops at remote places are concentratedly inventoried. With such a centralized inventory system, it is possible to make arrangements to inventory the object commodities, such as counting or checking the expiration dates, on demand. This allows clerks at an individual selling area to be reduced, enabling inventorying costs to be cut.

An inventory employee transmits instructions for the shop to the shop (the clerk computer 10B) from the inventory computer 50A or 50B, or the mobile information terminal 50C so that the inventory